Ukraine's deep-water gateway is in America's strategic interest

Berezan Port offers an opportunity to secure a Black Sea position

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While war continues in eastern Ukraine, a project is taking shape in the country's south that could define Ukraine's future for decades.

This is not another effort to rebuild what has been destroyed. It is a plan to build from the ground up: a deep-water seaport and industrial cluster on the shore of the Berezan Estuary in Mykolaiv Oblast, known as the Berezan Port project.

The port will be located on the site of a former Soviet submarine base on the Black Sea, approximately midway between Crimea and Odesa. The location has no further military value and is not near populated areas, so it poses no incentive as a military target for Russia. Ukraine controls this area of the Black Sea, foreclosing any potential Russian sea attack.

For Ukraine, the project provides an opportunity to rebuild its industrial base near a modern, private, world-class shipping hub. For the United States, it is an opportunity to secure a position in the strategically vital Black Sea region and gain access to resources that America urgently needs.

The project is currently in the planning stages, focused on feasibility studies and capital formation. As with any endeavor, proper planning is important for future success.

Berezan Port creates an economic platform. It will include a port, rail and road shipping center, a cargo airport, a tax-free industrial zone, a commodity storage center and a site for processing raw materials, producing metals, exporting grain, handling container cargo, moving energy resources, and supporting the production and shipment of rare earths and other strategic materials.

The private-sector initiative is being advanced by the Ukrainian Sunpro Group, which has deep practical experience in industry, agricultural processing, energy and logistics. At Sunpro's initiative, the Berezan Port management company was established in 2020.

Roman Popadiuk, the first U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, chairs the port's supervisory board.

Ukraine needs new gateways to the world. Its old ports, especially those in Odesa and Mykolaiv, were built for another era. Many Ukrainian ports are in densely populated urban areas, burdened by outdated infrastructure and environmental and logistical challenges.

They remain important, but they cannot, by themselves, deliver the economic leap Ukraine will need in the coming decades, nor are they well suited to help facilitate the Ukraine-U.S. mineral resources agreement that the countries signed in April 2025.

Ukraine will face several challenges to keep pace with other countries in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea basin if it relies on deep-water port infrastructure from the last century.

Berezan Port will be built away from major residential areas, with modern planning, direct access to the sea, a connected industrial zone, environmental standards, digital management, modern logistics and a transparent model for international users and stakeholders.

Direct sea access should reduce dependence on the complex, costly pilotage required in other Ukrainian ports, lowering cargo-handling costs and improving efficiency and competitiveness.

The Black Sea is a space where the interests of Russia, Turkey, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia intersect. Whoever shapes the region's infrastructure influences the routes of grain, metals, energy, raw materials and future minerals. Supporting Berezan Port will strengthen U.S. presence in the region, not through a military base but through a powerful economic anchor.

The link to rare and strategic minerals is particularly important. Ukraine has significant potential for the extraction and processing of critical resources, including titanium, lithium, graphite, gallium, rare earth elements and other materials needed for defense, energy, aviation, electronics and advanced technology.

Still, minerals alone do not create geopolitical power. They must be mined, processed, transported, exported and integrated into allied supply chains. That requires infrastructure. This is where Berezan Port can become a key extension of the U.S.-Ukraine partnership on critical minerals.

The U.S. is not interested merely in accessing raw materials; it wants to ensure that those materials do not fall under the control of Russia, China or opaque intermediaries. A new port and industrial cluster can become the place where mining, processing and export of strategic materials are tied to Western markets and Western standards.

For Ukraine, Berezan Port is a chance to create jobs, bring refugees home, rebuild lost industry and expand exports. It is a chance for America to strengthen its leadership in the Black Sea region, gain access to new critical mineral supply chains and ensure that Ukraine's strategic infrastructure does not fall into the hands of competitors.

U.S. investors stand to gain by participating in the construction of the Black Sea's most modern and strategic new port, the development of the surrounding tax-free industrial zone and smart city, the facilitation of access to nearby rare earth elements, and the development of port-related infrastructure.

For Europe, it is a chance to gain a new logistics partner on the eastern edge of a future enlarged European Union, and for Ukrainian cities, it is a chance to relieve historic centers of heavy port burdens and reopen the sea to the public.

The United States and its allies should view Berezan Port as a strategic investment in the postwar order of the Black Sea.

Jon Queen is CEO of Berezan Port LLC and has been a member of Ukraine's business community for more than 20 years